

Picture: CATERS

Alistair Cook at summit just minutes before he collapsed



Briton dies moments after fulfilling his Kilimanjaro dream

By Cyril Dixon

A BRITISH man collapsed and died just minutes after fulfilling a lifelong ambition to climb Mount Kilimanjaro.

Businessman Alistair Cook, 69, had just sent a text message telling his wife Vicky of his achievement when he suffered a fatal heart attack.

Mr Cook, an experienced hiker, told his wife he felt "exhausted but so happy" after reaching the summit of Africa's highest mountain.

The expedition had been arranged to mark his 70th birthday on Monday.

Mrs Cook yesterday paid tribute to the man whose "energy and enthusiasm" led him to set up his business.

She said: "When he was training and climbed Mount Snowdon, everyone told him it should take three hours to reach the top, but he did it in an hour and a quarter.

"A lady he was climbing with told me he said to her, 'It's the hardest thing I have ever done, but I feel ecstatic'.

"I think that is a great tribute to Alistair and the man he was. He had lots



The path up 19,000ft Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest peak

of energy and enthusiasm – a passion for life.

"He built up a great business all from scratch."

Mr Cook was the first of his five-strong party to reach the top of the mountain in Tanzania, despite being the oldest by a decade.

The final message to his wife, sent on September 11, said: "Reached the summit at 09.50am, feel exhausted but so happy."

He undertook the trek with four other climbers as part of a trip organised by Team Kilimanjaro, a company which specialises in climbing holidays on the

mountain. The tragedy happened on the descent.

Mr Cook was an engineer by trade, but founded Framers Corner, a picture-framing firm in Bardon, Leicestershire, 34 years ago.

His three children, Richard, 41, Alex, 38, and Samantha, 36, helped run the company.

Richard, its general manager, said that his father, a former Rotary Club branch chairman in Loughborough, "never stopped".

He added: "He was always active both inside and outside of work.

"The climb was something he had always wanted to do."

By Anil Dawar

BRITAIN'S motorway speed limit is to rise to 80mph as part of a plan to boost the country's economy, it was revealed yesterday.

Ministers want to get the UK moving in the "fast lane" of world economies by scrapping the "out of date" 70mph limit.

Motoring organisations welcomed the "long overdue" move – although campaigners warned it could lead to a rise in road deaths.

The change will be announced by Transport Secretary Philip Hammond at next week's Conservative conference in Manchester and follows months of fierce negotiations with Lib Dem climate minister Chris Huhne and Tory Health Secretary Andrew Lansley.

Mr Hammond has always argued increasing the limit would shorten journey times and boost the economy. But environmentalists fear the effect of the increased emissions and health experts predict there will be more deaths and serious injuries in crashes.

The maximum of 70mph is widely ignored by motorists and police rarely prosecute anyone driving under 80mph. When it was introduced in 1965, it was the top speed of most cars at the time.

Professor Stephen Glaister, director of the RAC Foundation, said: "There are good reasons for making 80 the new 70, and good reasons not to. Drivers travelling that 10mph quicker might reach

80mph motorway limit to speed up the economy

their destination sooner, but will use about 20 per cent more fuel and emit 20 per cent more CO₂."

He also predicted a "slight increase" in road casualties and raised concerns that police may end up turning a blind eye to people breaking the 80mph limit making it an unofficial 90mph."

Vince Yearley, of the Institute of Advanced Motorists, said: "As long as the new limit does not become 90mph by default and there is no rise in the number of motorway related incidents, we have no problem with it."

Brian Gregory, of the Association of British Drivers, said the rise was "long overdue". He said: "Vehicle technology has improved so much since the 70mph limit was created that it is almost irrelevant.

"Brakes and suspension nowadays are so good the stopping distances are shorter." But road

safety campaigners criticised the move. Ellen Booth, from Brake, said: "The government should be looking to reduce the number of deaths and injuries on our road not putting forward proposals which are likely to increase them.

"We work closely with families of those who have died in car crashes and for every statistic there are real people who are suffering."

Britain has some of the safest roads and motorways in Europe, as well as a lower speed limit than most of the continent.

There were 132 deaths on motorways in 2009 when the number of road deaths was 2,222, the lowest since records began.

Latest Department for Transport statistics show nearly half of cars exceeded the 70mph speed limit on motorways last year and one in seven was 80mph or faster.

The maximum speed limit in

France and Italy is 130kph (81mph), while in Ireland, Spain and Portugal it is 120kph (75mph). German autobahns are unrestricted.

Mr Hammond said yesterday: "It is time to put Britain back in the fast lane of global economies and look again at the motorway speed limit which is nearly 50 years old, and out of date thanks to huge advances in safety and motoring technology.

"Increasing the motorway speed limit to 80mph would generate economic benefits of hundreds of millions of pounds through shorter journey times."

Lorries above 7.5 tons are expected to retain their 60mph motorway limit. Consultation documents are being sent out later this year with hopes the move could be made permanent by 2013.

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Philip Hammond says limit is 'out of date'